

# Dorothea Dix Park Master Plan Executive Summary

# Foreward

Dorothea Dix Park represents an extraordinary opportunity for our community. The chance to create a new public space this size in the center of a city is remarkable – and simply unparalleled in the United States today. This is especially true with land of such beauty, history, and potential: landscapes with gentle hills and valleys, beautiful groves and open fields, historic buildings and grand approaches, skyline views and majestic oaks. Dorothea Dix Park will bring the community together – a place of belonging, wellness and celebration for all individuals and families.

In July 2015, the City of Raleigh acquired the Dorothea Dix campus from the State of North Carolina with the intent of creating a great destination park in the heart of the community. An early step in transforming the 308-acre site into a beloved public park is drafting a master plan. Master plans assess existing conditions, outline general priorities, and make recommendations on future options. Plans are most successful when they represent an aspirational vision that brings together the broadest possible interest, goals and desires of different community groups. In addition, effective master plans are flexible and responsive to changing community values over time.

The Master Plan for Dorothea Dix Park proposes a bold vision for the future and recommendations to support the implementation of that vision. The Master Plan is a result of site analysis, evaluation of best practices, expertise from the consultant team, and most importantly, a synthesis of extensive city-wide engagement and feedback. Over the past 18-months the City, in partnership with the consultant team led by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, has held

hundreds of opportunities for tens of thousands of community members to participate in exploring and shaping the future of Dorothea Dix Park. This unparalleled effort has been the largest outreach and engagement process the City has ever undertaken. The feedback has led to an understanding of the diverse needs, wants and expectations of the community. And to the realization that not everyone has the same opinion on the future of the park. The Master Plan celebrates this diversity and acknowledges these differences by describing a vision for the future of Dorothea Dix Park that is balanced, innovative and responsive.

Dorothea Dix Park will be created over decades. The Master Plan is the beginning of a much more detailed public process to design and construct all aspects of the park through phases. The proposals in the Master Plan create a conceptual framework for the future of this public discussion. Important details, vital to park success, like parking plan, building reuse, funding mechanisms and partnerships, will require further detailed study in future phases and be part of a public process that ultimately goes to the Raleigh City Council for review and approval.

The intention of the City is to create a great park, a beloved public space, a common ground for all of Raleigh to enjoy. A place that reflects the broadest desires and opportunities for the community. Future generations will see this as a transformational moment in Raleigh's history. The Master Plan is just the beginning of what will be an exciting, inclusive process to realize the greatest potential of Dorothea Dix Park for many years to come.





# The Site Plan





# The Core Principles



The Master Plan identifies three **Core Principles** to guide and shape every step of Dorothea Dix Park's transformation, from planning, design, construction, and maintenance to future park use by partners and visitors.



# **I Open Up and Connect**

Opening up and connecting the park to the city, the region and the state requires improving access for all communities, through all modes. Connection includes physical links, such as bridges and path networks, as well as cultural and community links, such as broadening the types of groups and institutions that host events at the park.

# **II Build From What Is There**

The qualities and character of a great park grow out of the specifics of its site and context. In that light, the events and remnants of natural and human history found on the Dix Park land are not challenges to overcome or to be erased. Rather, the site's past includes important resources — the primary materials, stories, and experiences — to make up and shape the future park.

# **III Offer Something for Everyone**

Dix Park will become a beloved destination for neighbors, citizens from across the region and visitors from around the world as it celebrates community diversity, hosts a distinct mix of activities, and includes bold park features.



# The Six Landscapes



Reflecting the various features and terrain of land found throughout the region, the Master Plan proposes Dix Park be transformed through six distinct landscapes: the Creek, the Meadow, the Ridge, the Grove, the Gateway, and the Valley. Each landscape is informed by historical research, ecological analysis, and the potential of the land. Altogether, the six landscapes capture what is currently unique while transitioning the site into a great park.





## THE CREEK

After decades of neglect, Rocky Branch, one of the essential natural elements of the Dix Park site, will be restored. The Master Plan proposes widening the creek to improve habitat and stormwater quality. The Creek will showcase the ecological diversity of the Piedmont's wetlands while providing visitors a natural-feeling area to experience water.



## THE MEADOW

The Meadow will expand the much-loved Big Field to create a vast and accessible common ground for Raleigh. Locals, newcomers, and visitors will gather and wander through this boundless-feeling landscape, which will extend Raleigh's park network by connecting Pullen Park to the State Farmers' Market through Dix Park.



## THE GROVE

The picturesque winding entry drive of original 1850s hospital is reclaimed for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Master Plan adds to The Grove's existing mature oak canopy with native understory plants and shade gardens, and restores an area of the historic grove that became a site for cottages in the 1930s-1950s.



## THE GATEWAY

Improvements to The Gateway landscape embody the core park principle of opening up and creating new connections. In the Master Plan, The Gateway contains several important new civic entrances to the park from downtown, I-40 and from Fuller Heights Neighborhood. A grand plaza with playgrounds and concessions will welcome the city and the region to the future Dix Park.



## THE RIDGE

The historic center of the site, The Ridge, will be reinvented as the civic heart of the park. Buildings that surround the historic architecture of the campus will be selectively removed to make space for cultural and social activities in a new outdoor living room for the city. The Loop will unify the park with a flat multi-use path that connects the six landscapes of the park.



## THE VALLEY

The Valley, a landform that formerly helped hide the hospital's power plant, will be repurposed to hold an amphitheater for concerts, performances and other events. Inspired by the railroad that bisects the park, an elevated trestle walk will enable pedestrians to cross the site from The Ridge to the proposed Water Garden in The Meadow.



# The Framework



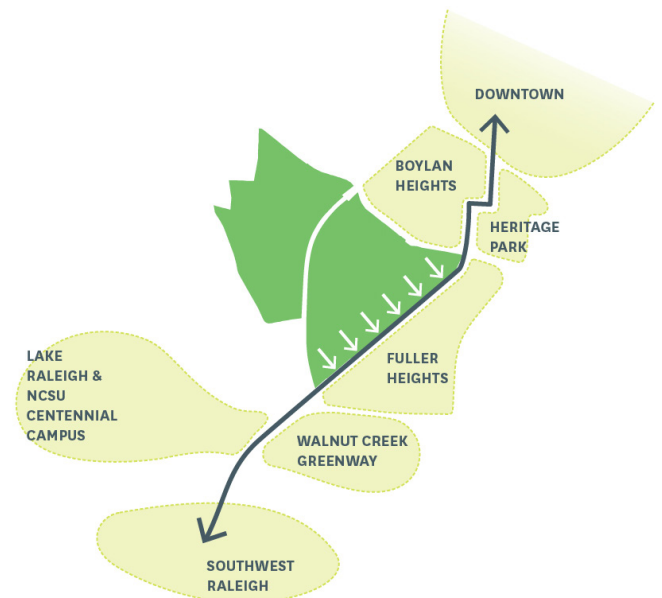
The framework structures the park and our experience of how we get there and move through it. The framework is made up of a unifying network of paths, roads and entrances incorporating buildings to provide complementary indoor and outdoor spaces. The park will be inviting and easy to navigate by providing a strong framework that is accessible and welcoming.



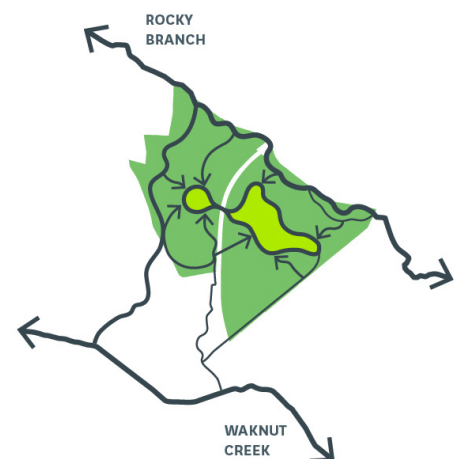
Many More Inviting Entries Welcome Visitors From All Edges



The Lake Wheeler Road Corridor Becomes a Gateway to the Park



Multi-Use Paths Add to the Regional Greenway Network





# The Program



The Master Plan suggests ideas of how each landscape could be used by visitors. This includes open and green spaces, playgrounds, plazas, gardens, building use, performance spaces, public art—and the list goes on.

Program refers to the various uses and activities that together create experiences of a park. In other words—what do you do when you get to Dix Park? The answer to this question will change over time as Raleigh grows and as the needs of the community evolve. The Master Plan organizes program into six themes listed on the following page.





## **WELLNESS AND PLAY**

For All Ages, For All Visitors



## **ARTS AND CULTURE**

Memorable Experiences



## **FOOD AND COMMUNITY**

Bringing Together Groups and Families



## **GARDENS AND ECOLOGY**

Inspired by the Land and the Region



## **HISTORY AND REFLECTION**

Connect the Past to Today

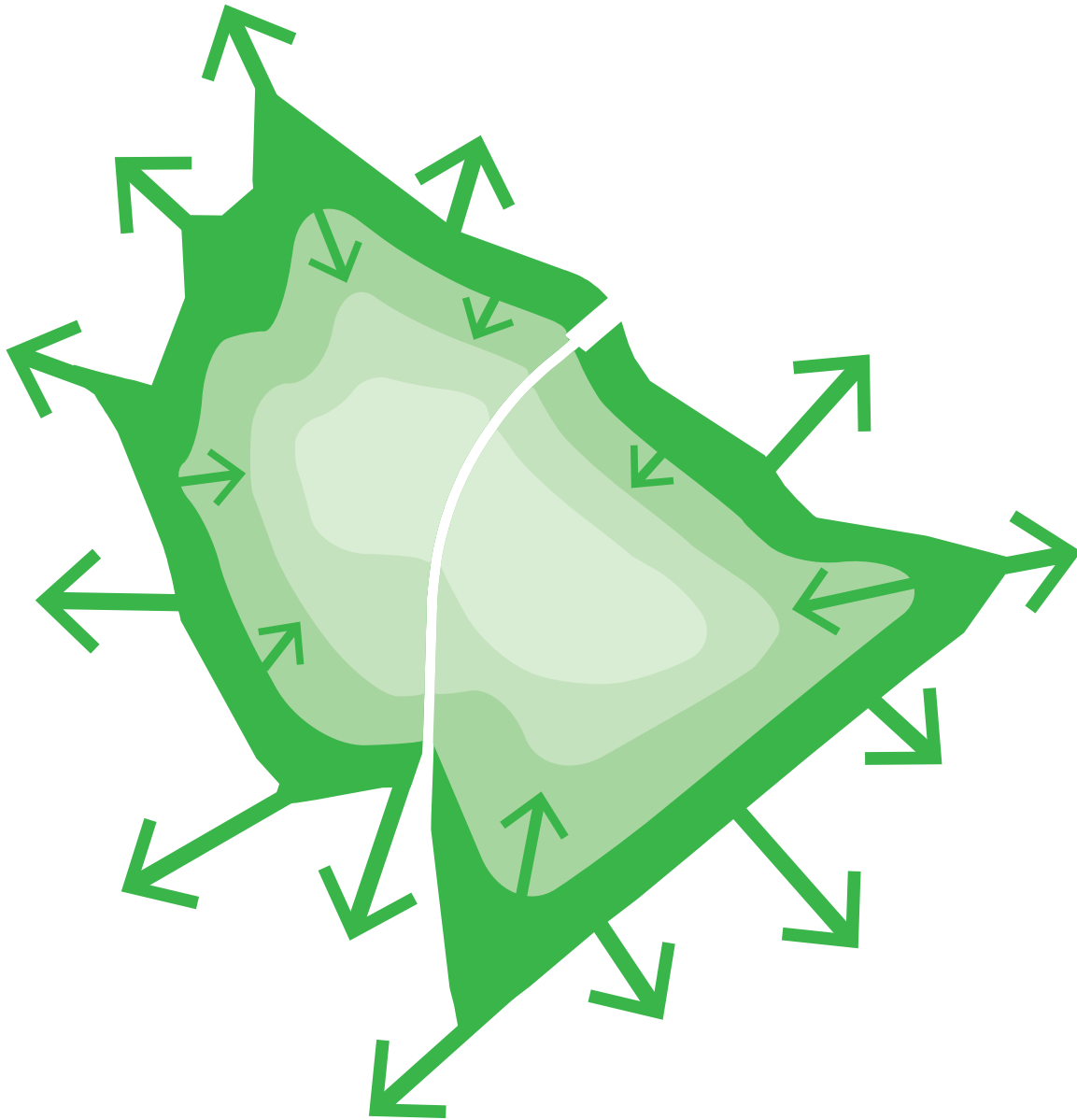


## **PARK SUPPORT**

What's Needed for Success



# Implementation

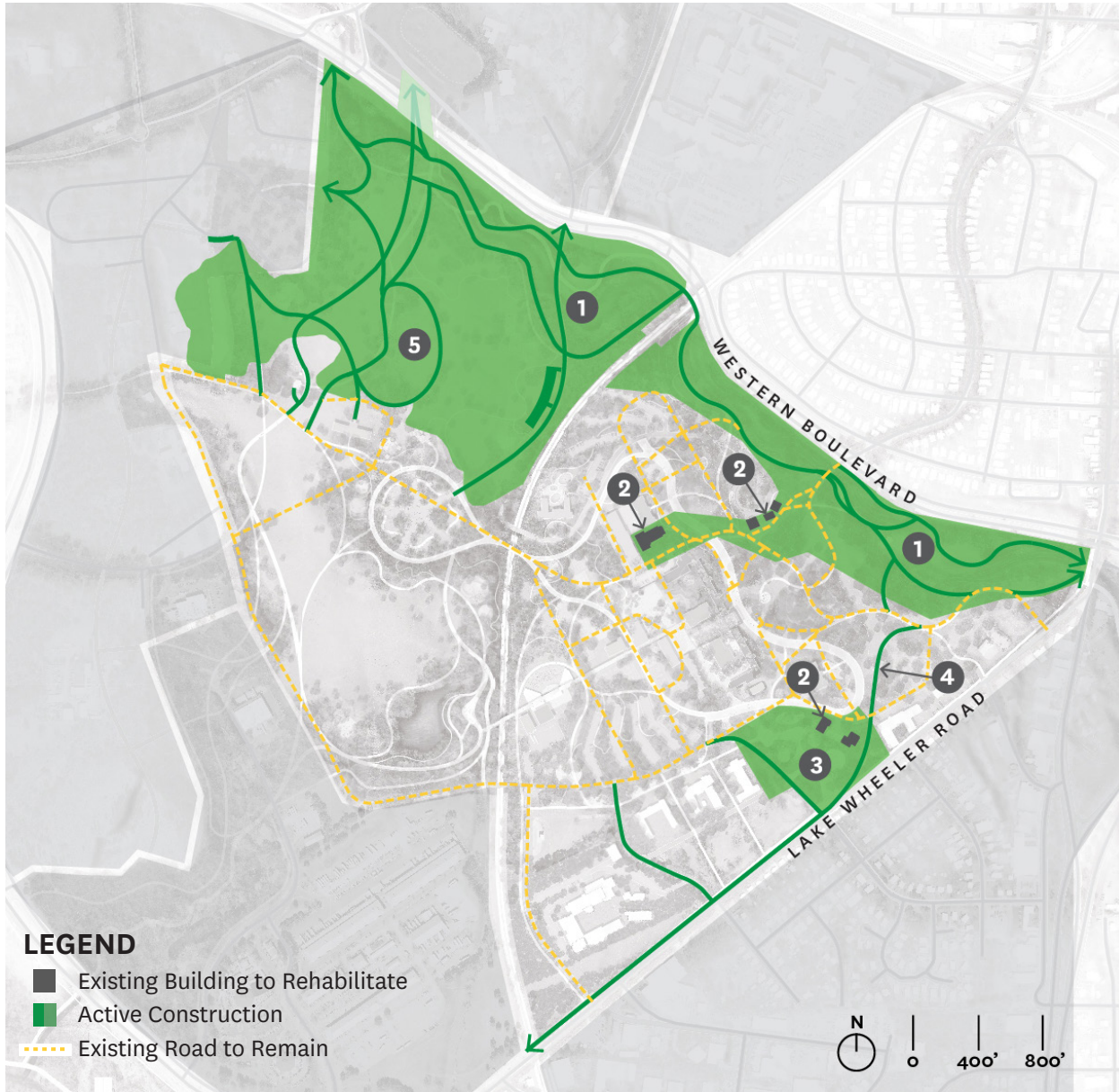


The Master Plan is an early step in the site's transformation into a beloved public park. The suggested next steps and strategies provide a framework to guide future decisions. Full build-out of the park is likely to take decades and will be part of a public process each step of the way.

The projects of Phase A open up the park and connect Dix Park to its surroundings, a core principle of the Master Plan. Primarily on the edges of the park, the projects include a mixture of areas of pastoral escape and activated park.

# Phase A (120 Acres)

## Welcoming Edges and Entries



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

- 1 Restore The Creek
- 2 Rehabilitate early transfer buildings (Chapel, the 3 Stone Houses, Buffaloe, Benner) and the landscapes that surround them
- 3 Main Entry with plaza and play areas at Lake Wheeler Road and Grissom Street
- 4 Multi-use path along Lake Wheeler Road
- 5 Cemetery Enhancements